DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 356 100 PS 021 437

AUTHOR McClellan, Diane E.; Katz, Lilian G.
TITLE Young Children's Social Development: A Checklist. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Urbana, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-PS-93-6
PUB DATE 93
CONTRACT RI88062012
NOTE 3p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Check Lists; Early Childhood Education; Individual Characteristics; *Interpersonal Competence; *Peer Relationship; *Social Development; *Student Evaluation; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests; *Social Attributes Checklist

ABSTRACT

The best childhood predictor of later adult adaptation is the adequacy with which a child gets along with other children. Because social development begins in the early years, it is appropriate that early childhood programs include regular formal and informal assessment of children's acquisition of social competence. This digest presents the Social Attributes Checklist, which teachers may use to measure children's social behavior. The digest explains the rationale for and the use of the checklist. The checklist contains 8 items that measure children's individual attributes, such as mood, coping, and empathy; 14 items that measure social skill attributes, such as assertion of rights, participation in discussions, and interest in others; and 2 items that measure the peer relationship attributes of peer acceptance and participation in activities with other children. In order to use the checklist effectively, teachers should: (1) sample children's social functioning over a period of about a month; (2) recognize that the quality of children's relationships is a more important index of social functioning than the quantity of relationships; (3) recognize that the attributes listed should usually, and not necessarily always, characterize a child's behavior; (4) implement strategies to help children outgrow social difficulties; and (5) understand that what constitutes appropriate or effective social behavior may differ in different cultural and family backgrounds. (BC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED356100

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, Illinois 61801
(217) 333-1386

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

ERIC Digest

EDO-PS-93-6

PS 021437

Young Children's Social Development: A Checklist

Diane E. McClellan and Lilian G. Katz

Early childhood educators have traditionally given high priority to enhancing young children's social development. During the last two decades a convincing body of evidence has accumulated to indicate that unless children achieve minimal social competence by about the age of six years, they have a high probability of being at risk throughout life. Hartup suggests that peer relationships contribute a great deal to both social and cognitive development and to the effectiveness with which we function as adults (1992). He states that:

> Indeed, the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is *not* IQ, *not* school grades, and *not* classroom behavior but, rather the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children. Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with other children, and who cannot establish a place for themselves in the peer culture are seriously "at risk" (Hartup, 1991).

The risks are many: poor mental health, dropping out of school, low achievement and other school difficulties, poor employment history, and so forth (see Katz and McClellan, 1991). Given the life-long consequences, relationships should be counted as the first of the four R's of education.

Because social development begins in the early years, it is appropriate that all early childhood programs include regular periodic formal and informal assessment of children's progress in the acquisition of social competence. The set of items presented below is based largely on research identifying elements of social competence in young children, and on studies in which the behavior of well-liked children has been compared to that of less well-liked children (Katz and McClellan, 1991).

The Social Attributes Checklist

The checklist provided in this digest includes attributes of a child's social behavior and preschool experience which teachers should examine every three or four months. Consultations with parents and other caregivers help make the attributes and assessments realistic and reliable.

In using the checklist, teachers should pay attention to whether the attributes are typical. This requires sampling the child's functioning over a period of about three or four weeks. Any child can have one or two really bad days, for a variety of reasons; if assessments are to be reasonably reliable, judgments of the overall pattern of functioning over a period of about a month is required.

Healthy social development does not require that a child be a "social butterfly." The quality rather than quantity of a child's friendships is the important index to note. Keep in mind also that there is evidence that some children are simply shyer than others, and it may be counter-productive to push such children into social relations which make them uncomfortable (Katz and McClellan, 1991). Furthermore, unless that shyness is severe enough to prevent a child from enjoying most of the "good things of life," like birthday parties, picnics, and family outings, it is reasonable to assume that, when handled sensitively, the shyness will be spontaneously outgrown.

Many of the attributes listed in the checklist in this digest indicate adequate social growth if they *usually* characterize the child. This qualifier is included to ensure that occasional fluctuations do not lead to over-interpretation of children's temporary difficulties. On the basis of frequent direct contact with the child, observation in a variety of situations, and information obtained from parents and other caregivers, a teacher or caregiver can assess each child according to the checklist.

Teachers can observe and monitor interactions among the children and let children who rarely have difficulties attempt to solve conflicts by themselves before intervening. If a child appears to be doing well on most of the attributes and characteristics in the checklist, then it is reasonable to assume that occasional social difficulties will be outgrown without intervention.

However, if a child seems to be doing poorly on many of the items on the list, the adults responsible for his or her care can implement strategies that will help the child to overcome and outgrow social difficulties. We suggest that this checklist be used as a guide among teachers and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Social Attributes Checklist

I. Individual Attributes

The child:

1. Is **usually** in a positive mood
2. Is not **excessively** dependent on the teacher, assistant or other adults
3. **Usually** comes to the program or setting willingly
4. **Usually** copes with rebuffs and reverses adequately
5. Shows the capacity to empathize
6. Has positive relationship with one or two peers; shows capacity to really care about them, miss them if absent, etc.
7. Displays the capacity for humor
8. Does not seem to be acutely or chronically lonely

II. Social Skill Attributes

The child **usually**:

1. Approaches others positively
2. Expresses wishes and preferences clearly; gives reasons for actions and positions
3. Asserts own rights and needs appropriately
4. Is not easily intimated by bullies
5. Expresses frustrations and anger effectively and without harming others or property
6. Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
7. Enters ongoing discussion on the subject; makes relevant contributions to ongoing activities
8. Takes turns fairly easily
9. Shows interest in others; exchanges information with and requests information from others appropriately
10. Negotiates and compromises with others appropriately
11. Does not draw inappropriate attention to self
12. Accepts and enjoys peers and adults of ethnic groups other than his or her own.
13. Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
14. Interacts non-verbally with other children with smiles, waves, nods, etc.

III. Peer Relationship Attributes

The child is:

1. **Usually** accepted versus neglected or rejected by other children
2. **Sometimes** invited by other children to join them in play, friendship, and work.

parents. The intent is not to supply a prescription for "correct social behavior," but rather to help teachers observe, understand, and support children as they grow in social skillfulness. If a child seems to be doing poorly on many of the items on the list, the adults responsible for his or her care can implement strategies that will help the child to establish more satisfying relationships with other children (Katz and McClellan, 1991).

Finally, it is also important to keep in mind that children vary in social behavior for a variety of reasons. Research indicates that children have distinct personalities and temperaments from birth. In addition, nuclear and extended family relationships obviously affect social behavior. What is appropriate or effective social behavior in one culture may be less effective in another culture. Children from diverse cultural and family backgrounds thus may need help in bridging their differences and in finding ways to learn from and enjoy the company of one another. Teachers have a responsibility to be proactive rather than laissez faire in creating a classroom community that is open, honest, and accepting.

This digest is adapted from the article, "Assessing the Social Development of Young Children. A Checklist of Social Attributes," which appeared in the Fall 1992 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood* (pp. 9-10).

For More Information

Asher, S., and J. Coie. *Peer Rejection and Childhood Education.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Cassidy, J. and S.R. Asher. "Loneliness and Peer Relations in Young Children." *Child Development* 63 (1992): 350-365.

Hartup, W.W. *Having Friends, Making Friends, and Keeping Friends: Relationships as Educational Contexts.* Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearing-house on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1992. ED 345 854.

Katz, L.G. and D. McClellan. *The Teacher's Role in the Social Development of Young Children.* Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1991. ED 346 988.

Newcomb, A.F., W.M. Bukowski, and L. Tattee. "Children's Peer Relations: A Meta-analytic Review of Popular, Rejected, Neglected, Controversial, and Average Sociometric Status." *Psychological Bulletin* 113(1) (1993): 99-128.

Paley, G. *You Can't Say You Can't Play.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Rizzo, Thomas. *Friendship Development among Children in School.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1989.

References identified with an ED (ERIC document) number are cited in the ERIC database. Documents are available in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 825 locations worldwide. Documents can also be ordered through EDRS: (800) 443-ERIC. References with an EJ (ERIC journal) number are available through the originating journal, interlibrary loan services, or article reproduction clearinghouses: UMI (800) 732-0616; or ISI (800) 523-1850.

This publication was funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. OERI 88-062012. Opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI. ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated.